



Welcome

## THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ERNIE

With BTME/ClubHouse now a fading memory it is time to welcome in the new golf season and in the world of professional tournament golf it looks like it might be quite a humdinger.

For too long now the question has been "Who is going to step up to the plate and challenge Tiger?" Well it looks as though we may have an answer.

The start Ernie Els has had to the season has made even Tiger stand up and take notice.

As I sit here Ernie has played six tournaments, won five and was second in the other... and in that one he led by one with a hole to play but finished bogey to Lian-Wei Zhang's birdied to lose. No, I hadn't heard of Lian-Wei Zhang either, but he is the only man to have got his nose in front of Ernie so far this year. Not a bad claim to fame.

As Tiger himself said when asked to comment on Ernie's form, "You can hit the ball 400 yards off the tee but you still have to get the ball in the hole and Ernie isn't missing from 12 feet in."

It might have been so different had Ernie contrived to lose last year's Open at Muirfield. With so many opportunities to nail down victory had he not eventually done so the mental scars would have lingered for some time but as it is the positives he must have taken from that have been a real springboard to his current successes.

With The Great One having had an enforced layoff due to a leg injury, the feeling among the golfing press began to take hold that the gap between the two was narrowing and hopefully we could be producing one of those great head-to-head rivalries that makes golf so exciting. Nicklaus and Palmer, Nicklaus and Watson, Faldo and Norman created huge interest but while we have been able to marvel at Tiger's dominance and record making achievements we haven't seen him needing to make birdie down the last to win nearly often enough.

David Duval and Phil Mickelson and to a lesser extent Sergio Garcia have mounted challenges but Duval has lost a bit of form since winning The Open at Royal Lytham; Mickelson can't seem to keep himself in full control coming down the stretch in a Major and is still to win one, while Garcia still has time to develop into a player who can compete regularly.

But in Ernie we have a class player playing at the top of his form, with a run the like of which I can't recall having seen, and if he can sustain it a viable challenge for supremacy will be mounted.

But what did Tiger do in his first tournament back from injury? Need you ask. He won by four shots.

So it looks very much as though it is game on between Tiger and Ernie, and golf can only benefit.

Scott MacCallum, Editor

# JAMES (JIMMY) MACDONALD MBE

## 25TH APRIL 1934 – 21ST JANUARY 2003

It is with great sadness that I must inform fellow greenkeepers of the death of Jimmy MacDonald, who passed away in hospital on 21st January 2003.

Jimmy was one of the most respected and experienced greenkeepers in the country, with many of the great names writing to congratulate him when he was awarded the MBE in 1997.

Jimmy started his illustrious career at Lytham Greendrive Golf Course and then moved to Royal Lytham & St Annes Golf Club in 1964, where he became Deputy Head Greenkeeper.

In 1970 he moved to Formby Golf Club as Head Greenkeeper, until he was invited back to Royal Lytham & St Annes Golf Club as Head Greenkeeper in 1973.

During his career at Royal Lytham & St Annes Jimmy had the unique record of being, Deputy Head Greenkeeper for the 1969 British Open won by Tony Jacklin and was proud to have been Head Greenkeeper for four Open Championships:- 1974 won by Gary Player, 1979, & 1989 won by Seve Ballesteros and his last open in 1996, which was won by Tom Lehman. Jimmy was also proud to have had four Seniors Opens, the Ryder Cup and Home International. Amateur Championship, Curtis Cup and the Weetabix Women's Open.

His one regret was that he never had the Walker Cup, which he said on many occasions that this would have completed the set for him.

Upon his retirement Jimmy was proud to have been awarded honorary life membership of Royal Lytham & St Annes.

He was also immensely proud of his home nine hole course at Traigh in the West Highlands, where he assisted in the design, layout and rebuilding work. The 4th hole, a 247 yard par-4, is named after him "Jimmy's Choice".

Jimmy had been a keen golfer playing off 4 in his peak when he won many trophy's including the Ex Servicemen's Trophy.

Jimmy was a great believer in greenkeeper training and helped many students to develop their practical skills with on course training at Royal Lytham. He always had time for people and will be remembered for his help and guidance.

He helped many of his staff (his old boys) to progress and become Head Greenkeepers and Course Managers, including John Bucher, Derek Postlethwaite, Chris Whittle, Geoff Whittle, Mark Broughton, Peter Simpson, Ritchie Bradshaw, and Paul Smith, who became Jimmy's successor at Royal Lytham.

Jimmy always said he had two women in his life, "his wife, Carol, and his golf course Royal Lytham". He always had an anecdote to help make a point and one in particular, when being interviewed about the course it was mentioned that Royal Lytham was not the most picturesque of golf courses, Jimmy's reply was, "No it was not a pretty course but there again it is not the prettiest of ladies who necessarily make the best wives."

Jimmy's love for the course was legendary and he always defended it against its critics, "people say it is surrounded by houses. But you don't have time to look at the houses. You must concentrate on your game and as a test of golf there is no better."

Our heartfelt sympathy goes to Jimmy's wife, Carol, daughters, Alison and Claire, son, Andrew, and his beloved grandchildren.

A truly great man. One of the last true traditional links greenkeepers and one that we are all proud to have known.

Geoff Whittle



## GOLFPLUS

GolfPlus, have been swamped with enquiries and overwhelmed by the response they received following their launch at January's BTME & ClubHouse Exhibition.

"We are delighted by the levels of enquiries we had at the show," commented Colin Surman, of GolfPlus.

"Particularly as it was the first time we had exhibited. We were also encouraged by how many clubs were planning to expand their buggy fleets for the coming season, and how they are increasingly seeing golf buggies as a source of profits".

GolfPlus's buggy GPS system adds a new dimension to a golfers buggy round, and in the process drives greater demand for buggies promising Golf

Professionals exciting new revenue opportunities from their buggy fleets.

"Being a British designed and manufactured product, we are able to guarantee our customers the very best in service and support," added Colin. "We work closely with regional and national buggy distributors to make sure that we can offer the same or next day part replacements, and in doing so, minimising the impact on the golf operation".

Email press releases and new product updates to: [scott@bigga.co.uk](mailto:scott@bigga.co.uk)